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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 002319

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SUBJECT: MAPP/OAS IN VALLEDUPAR: PROGRESS BUT A WEAK ECONOMY AND CRIMINAL GROUPS REMAIN CHALLENGES

REF: BOGOTA 7397

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer. Reason: 1.4(b,d)

Summary

11. (U) During a June 19 visit to Valledupar organized by the MAPP/OAS (Organization of American States' Mission to Support the Peace Process), security forces and local officials described an improved security environment overall, but noted concerns over continued threats by the FARC and criminal groups. MAPP officials highlighted weak interagency coordination on demobilization and reinsertion programs, as well as the need for more resources for victims. Cesar's governor is formulating a Peace and Development Plan that would include job creation, vocational training, and investment initiatives to combat high unemployment and poverty, and assist the large internally displaced population. Security forces note continued efforts to combat illegal armed groups and track the 3146 demobilized paramilitaries living in Cesar. End Summary.

Illegal Armed Groups Threaten, Recruit Demobilized

12. (SBU) On June 19, MAPP/OAS (Organization of American States' Mission to Support the Peace Process) Director Sergio Caramagna led a delegation from the U.S., Canadian, Norwegian and Spanish embassies to Valledupar (Cesar department) to assess MAPP's activities in the region.. MAPP's Valledupar office covers four departments: Cesar, Atlantico, Magdalena, and Guajira. Caramagna said the security situation in Cesar had improved vastly compared to four years ago when AUC commanders such as Rodrigo Tovar Pupo ("Jorge 40") terrorized the population. Still, new criminal groups -- including some former AUC "Bloque Norte" members -- continue to engage in extortion, murder, and forced recruitment. Local MAPP official Victoria Figueira said weak interagency coordination on demobilization and reinsertion programs has left a security vacuum for demobilized. Reports of threats, forced recruitment, and murders of demobilized by criminal groups are a growing concern. She stressed the importance of providing more resources for psycho social services, job creation programs, and general assistance for demobilized paramilitaries.

Attention to Victims Needed

13. (C) MAPP officials said the National Commission for Reintegration and Reconciliation (CNRR) set up a local office in January 2008, but it lacks basic resources like internet connections and proper staffing. There are seven indigenous groups in Cesar, including the Arhuaco and Yupa in the Sierra Nevada area, who receive threats by the FARC and other criminal groups, but do not report them to the Human Rights Ombudsman for fear of retaliation. Figueroa said the Vice President's Office on Human Rights needs to engage victims and local communities in the development of a National Human Rights Development Plan, especially since local authorities have the will but lack resources. MAPP officials said the GOC has a "long way to go" to build confidence and be responsive to victims of human rights violations.

Security Better; Bigger Threat is Weak Economy

14. (U) Cesar Governor Cristian Moreno, who defeated well-financed candidates who enjoyed the support of politicians tied to the former paramilitaries in last October's elections, said he aims to place a department-level human rights representative (different from the Human Rights Ombudsman) in every municipality to respond to community concerns and channel information back to his office. Moreno said the election signified a fed-up public that wants to break with the past (reftel). He acknowledged that local institutions are weak and economic problems are severe,

including high unemployment rates among demobilized paramilitaries. Cesar is also home to 13,790 internally displaced families (65,477 people) who need basic assistance. He is formulating a Peace and Development Plan that would include economic stimulus, vocational training, and investment initiatives.

15. (SBU) Local police officials told us the department suffers from a 7.6 % unemployment rate, 44% poverty rate, and widespread activity by the FARC and criminal groups. The FARC's 59th, 41st and 19th fronts, along with ELN terrorists and criminal groups, vie for control of narcotrafficking routes. So far this year, the police have captured 40 and killed 16 members of criminal groups. Security forces estimate there are 3146 demobilized paramilitaries living in the department (of whom 1585 are in Valledupar)-- all are being tracked by the police. 345 have been arrested for various crimes. Of the 103 homicides in Cesar this year, 9 victims were demobilized paramilitaries. 10th Brigade colonel Hernan Fernandez underscored the strong coordination between the military and police forces, and added that the North Guajira area faced the most critical threat from the FARC and criminal groups.

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